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The National Security Working Group (NSWG) provides wide-spectrum coverage of issues like the Iranian threat, missile defense, sequestration, New START, events in Syria and more. We look forward to providing this newsletter to RSC members and welcome your input throughout the 113th Congress.

"Being Realistic about the Defense Budget" (Rep. Franks)

When Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel laid out his recommendations for the Defense Department's budget, he said we are repositioning to focus on "a world that is growing more volatile, more unpredictable, and in some instances, more threatening." He also stated that the President's budget plan balances the need to protect our national security with the need to be realistic about future budget levels.

If these recommendations become reality, the Air Force will retire aircraft and the active-duty Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserves end-strength will be reduced. In addition, the Navy and the Marines will face significant reductions to the fleet and to personnel. Department wide, there will be restrained pay raises, cuts to housing allowances, massive cuts to commissary subsidies and potentially increased healthcare fees for both active-duty families and retirees.

While we should be realistic about the budget - our needs versus wants - **dropping our defense to barebones levels and reducing the incentives for troops to join an all-volunteer force, all while facing a more unpredictable world, just doesn't make sense.** We were able to postpone many of the biggest cuts considered last year, but these new recommendations will continue shrinking the military and its generational edge. Even Secretary Hagel acknowledged that some of the budget choices will create additional risks. More troubling, the President is reducing our defense while driving up national debt and increasing mandatory spending program. It seems we are now spending more time and energy in recruiting participants for Obamacare than recruiting future leaders for our defense.



photo by Pvt. Elizabeth Fournier, U.S. Army
U.S. Army soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, Arizona Army National Guard, search a Military Operations in Urban Terrain site.

So Mr. President, let's balance the need to protect our national security with the need to be realistic about the budget. Realistically, we have real threats from nations that now have the ability to produce nuclear weapons, the missiles to deliver them inside our borders and the will to cause grave harm to our citizens. Realistically, there are now terrorists spread throughout the world with the determination to detonate bombs in crowds of innocent civilians. Realistically, the focus on a withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and on drastic military cuts undermines the worldwide mission our men and women in uniform carry out at this very moment.

Colleagues, if we fail to act on the proposals that impose risks to our Defense Department - to our men and women who serve - while facing an uncertain future, we may reach a point when no amount of hard work, innovation, legislation or money will allow us to return to the levels of freedom and protection we enjoy today.

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"Report Indicates China Ready to Deploy Submarine with Nuclear Tipped Missiles"

(Rep. Fleming)

Nearly a year ago, an unknown number of shooters with AK-47s knocked out 17 large transformers during a highly-choreographed assault on the PG&E Metcalf Transmission Substation in California. While the power company was able to avoid blackouts, the damage to the facility took nearly four weeks to repair. It is now dubbed the most significant power grid attack in U.S. history. Just last month, the general public finally learned of that attack, which has yielded no arrests for the crime.

This event highlights the threat posed by an unsecured electric grid. Had the perpetrators been using weapons far more powerful than an AK-47, the transformers might have arced over under load and been permanently disabled.

As those in the San Jose area learn how close they were to a long-term blackout, and as the American public learns of the electrical grid's vulnerability to attack by gunmen, much more alarming threats to the grid still loom in the background.

Just as with gunmen in the dark of night, a major electromagnetic pulse event could have the same effect, resulting in long-term damage to the civilian electric grid - the same grid upon which the military relies for 99 percent of its electrical needs. A worst case scenario would be a grave danger to our nation.

The reality of potential catastrophe from intense electromagnetic pulse on the electronic systems by a geomagnetic disturbance or a nuclear weapon is well-established.

But there are still naysayers who believe that the likelihood of terrorists or rogue nations obtaining nuclear weapons for an EMP attack is remote. Others choose to ignore the threat of a geomagnetic disturbance, such as major solar flares and storms. But in reality, how well were

we prepared for an attack on a California substation?

We have made small steps forward in informing the public about threat of a significant collapse, and we have discounted the rhetoric of those avoiding to address it because of cost, but we are still very far from adequately protecting our nation against a catastrophic EMP event.

Fortunately, as Congressional leaders, we are at the threshold of doing something positive for our national security - protecting one of our most vulnerable assets.

There is a moment in the life of every problem, when it is big enough to be seen by reasonable people and still small enough to be solved or addressed. We now live in that moment when there still may be time for the free world to address and mitigate the vulnerability that naturally occurring or weaponized EMP represents to our civilization.

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